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(54) Controlling the cross-linking reaction of an aqueous fracturing fluid

(57) In a method for providing controlled delay and improved high temperature gel stability of borated fracturing fluids, a base fluid is first prepared by blending together an aqueous fluid and a hydratable polymer which is capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions. The complexor is prepared by mixing a cross-linking additive capable of furnishing borate ions in solution with a delay additive. The delay additive is effective, within a selected pH range, to chemically bond with both boric acid and the borate ions produced by the cross-linking additive to thereby limit the number of borate ions initially available in solution for subsequent cross-linking of the hydratable polysaccharide. In addition to providing more precise control of the delay time, the complexor provides a reserve of borate which provides improved gel stability at higher temperatures.

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The present invention relates to methods and compositions useful as aqueous well fracturing fluids. It particularly relates to a novel liquid complexor used to obtain controlled delayed gellation of borated polysaccharides and improved gel stability at temperatures above about 200°F.

During hydraulic fracturing, a sand laden fluid is injected into a well bore under high pressure. Once the natural reservoir pressures are exceeded, the fracturing fluid initiates a fracture in the formation which generally continues to grow during pumping. The treatment design generally requires the fluid to reach maximum viscosity as it enters the fracture which affects the fracture length and width. This viscosity is normally obtained by the gellation of suitable polymers, such as a suitable polysaccharide. In recent years, gellation has been achieved by cross-linking these polymers with metal ions including aluminum, antimony, zirconium and titanium containing compounds including the

so-called organotitanates. See, for instance, U.S. Patent No. 4,514,309, issued April 30, 1985, and assigned to the assignee of the present invention.

5 The viscous fracturing fluid being pumped usually
encounters high shear in the pipe string during pumping from
the surface to the fracture and after entering the fracture,
flows at low shear. Recent investigations indicate that the
high shear encountered in the pipe string causes extensive
degradation of the cross-linked fracturing fluid. Also,
10 high fluid viscosities cause excessive back or friction
pressures, limiting the pumping rate, which also affects
fracture geometry. These investigations have shown that by
delaying the gellation for several minutes during most of
the high shear, higher pump rates can be obtained and the
15 fluid generally exhibits better stability.

Recently, guar and guar derivatives cross-linked with
borate ions have again become popular. In alkaline water
having a pH greater than about 7.8, cross-linking of the
guar polymer is essentially instantaneous. This action is
20 probably due to the fact that borates easily and readily
esterify with 1,2-cisoidial dialcohols or polyhedric
alcohols, such as those found on the guar polymer. This
esterification is readily reversible, especially at the
elevated temperatures found in the well bore, so that free
25 borate ion is always available. As a result, the delay of
borate ion cross-linking systems is difficult to achieve.

Also, for each cross-linking agent, there is a
generally recognized maximum temperature where the cross-
linker fails to give any increase in viscosity over that
30 observed for the base gel. For boron cross-linked gels,

this upper temperature limit is recognized in the prior art as being between about 150°F to 200°F.

Certain of the prior art borated guar systems have employed either slow dissolving metal oxides which slowly increase the fluid alkalinity, which in turn promotes cross-linking, or have used calcium borate salts having poor water solubility, relying upon the slow dissolution of borate ions for delay. In both cases, the delay action was based primarily on the slow dissolution of a solid in the aqueous fracturing fluid, resulting in poor control of the delay time and ultimate viscosity of the fluid. U.S. Patent No. 4,619,776, issued October 28, 1986, to *Mondshine*, is typical of the prior art in teaching the use of a sparingly soluble borate to achieve some degree of control over the cross-linking reaction.

Mondshine also discusses the use of sparingly soluble borates to achieve some degree of enhanced thermal stability since a "reserve" of boron is available for cross-linking over an extended period of time. However, *Mondshine's* gel stability examples only extend to an upper temperature limit of 110°C (230°F) and *Mondshine* advises the incorporation of organometallic agents to enhance extreme temperature conditions above 135°C (275°F). The introduction of impurities which are present in the sparingly soluble ores of *Mondshine* can also serve to degrade the overall performance of the fracturing job.

In Applicant's previously cited copending application, serial number 07/465,903, there is described a novel chemical mechanism for delaying the cross-linking reaction of a borated fracturing fluid in which the borate ions are

chemically chelated to reduce their initial availability, thus delaying the speed of the cross-linking reaction.

5 The present invention is directed to the additional discovery that such a chemical chelating mechanism can be used to provide a reserve of borate ions which provides high temperature gel stability for aqueous fracturing fluids at temperatures not previously possible with borated galactomannans.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The cross-linking system of the invention utilizes a novel complexor solution which both controls the gellation rate of an aqueous fracturing fluid containing a hydrated polysaccharide polymer and provides improved gel stability at temperatures up to about 300°F and above. The complexor solution comprises a cross-linking additive and a delay additive which controls the rate at which the cross-linking additive promotes gellation of the hydrated polymer, the control rate being a function of the pH of the complexor solution. The cross-linking additive is a material which supplies free borate ions in solution and the delay additive is a material which attempts to bind chemically to the borate ions in solution, whereby the hydrated polymer is forced to compete with the delay additive for the free borate ions. Preferably, the delay additive is selected from the group consisting of dialdehydes having about 1 to 4 carbon atoms, keto aldehydes having about 1 to 4 carbon atoms, hydroxyl aldehydes having about 1-4 carbon atoms, ortho substituted aromatic dialdehydes and ortho substituted aromatic hydroxyl aldehydes. The most preferred delay additive is glyoxal.

The cross-linking additive is present in a preselected amount to provide a quantity of borate ions which would be sufficient to normally over-crosslink a base fluid forming a poor quality gel without the presence of the delay additive. The delay additive serves to mask the presence of at least a portion of the borate ions at low temperature, thereby providing a reserve of borate ions for cross-linking the fluid at higher temperatures and providing improved gel stability.

In the method of the invention, a hydratable polymer capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions is blended with an aqueous fluid to form a base fluid and the polymer is allowed to hydrate. A complexor solution is formed for the base fluid by combining a cross-linking additive capable of furnishing borate ions in solution with a delay additive, to chemically bond with both boric acid and the free borate ions produced by the cross-linking additive to thereby limit the number of borate ions available in solution for initial cross-linking of the hydrated polymer. The pH of the complexor solution is adjusted in order to control the rate of the subsequent cross-linking of the hydratable polymer. By properly selecting the amounts of cross-linking additive and delay additive in the complexor solution, a reserve of borate ions is available which are sufficient to cross-link the polymer and to increase the thermal stability of the fracturing fluid at temperatures over 200°F.

Additional objects, features, and advantages will be apparent in the written description which follows.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

In order to practice the method of the present invention, an aqueous (water or brine) based fracturing fluid is first prepared by blending a hydratable polymer into the base fluid. Any suitable mixing apparatus may be used for this procedure. In the case of batch mixing, the hydratable polymer and aqueous fluid are blended for a period of time which is sufficient to form a hydrated sol. Once the hydration of the polymer is complete, a predetermined quantity of complexor solution is added to the base fluid sufficient to achieve a desired cross-linking reaction time and provide a reserve of borate ions available for cross-linking over a period of time at higher temperatures. The mixture is pumped into the well bore as the cross-linking reaction takes place.

It has been disclosed that the general upper temperature limit for boron cross-linked gels is within the range from about 65°C to about 100°C. By "higher temperatures" is meant temperatures above about 100°C (212°F), at which temperatures desired viscosity increases are not achievable with traditional boron cross-linked fluids.

Propping agents are typically added to the base fluid prior to the addition of the complexor. Propping agents include, for instance, quartz sand grains, glass and ceramic beads, walnut shell fragments, aluminum pellets, nylon pellets, and the like. The propping agents are normally used in concentrations between about 1 to 8 pounds per gallon of fracturing fluid composition, but higher or lower concentrations can be used as required. The base fluid can

also contain other conventional additives common to the well services industry such as surfactants, corrosion inhibitors, buffers, and the like.

5 The hydratable polymer useful in the present invention can be any of the hydratable polysaccharides familiar to those in the well service industry which is capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions to form a gelled base fluid. For instance, suitable hydratable polysaccharides are the galactomannan gums, glucomannan gums, guar, derived 10 guar and cellulose derivatives. Specific examples are guar gum, guar gum derivatives, locust bean gum, karaya gum, carboxymethyl cellulose, carboxymethylhydroxyethyl cellulose, and hydroxyethyl cellulose. The preferred gelling agents are guar gum, hydroxypropyl guar, 15 carboxymethylhydroxypropyl guar, and carboxymethylhydroxyethyl cellulose. A suitable synthetic polymer is polyvinyl alcohol. The most preferred hydratable polymers for the present invention are guar gum and hydroxypropyl guar.

20 The hydratable polymer is added to the aqueous base fluid in concentrations ranging from about 0.10% to 5.0% by weight of the aqueous fluid. The most preferred range for the present invention is about 0.24% to 0.72% by weight.

25 The complexor solution which is used to achieve high temperature gel stability comprises a cross-linking additive and a delay additive which controls the rate at which the cross-linking additive promotes gellation of the hydrated polymer, the control rate being a function of the pH of the complexor solution. The cross-linking additive can be any 30 convenient source of borate ions, for instance the alkali

metal and the alkaline earth metal borates boron monoxide and boric acid. A preferred cross-linking additive is sodium borate decahydrate. The cross-linking additive is present in a preselected amount to provide a quantity of borate ions or boric acid sufficient to normally degrade a base fluid without the presence of its companion delay additive. As will be described, the delay additive serves to mask the presence of at least a portion of the borate ions at low temperature, thereby providing a reserve of borate ions for cross-linking the fluid at higher temperatures and provide improved gel stability. For lower temperature applications, the sodium borate decahydrate is normally present from about 5 to 25 % by weight, most preferably about 10 to 15 % by weight of the complexor solution. For higher temperature applications, the sodium borate decahydrate content will normally be increased, as will be discussed.

The delay additive used in the complexor solution is a material which attempts to bind chemically to the borate ions produced by the cross-linking additive in solution, whereby the hydrated polymer is forced to compete with the delay additive for the borate ions. As will be explained, the effectiveness of the delay additive in chemically bonding to the borate ions in the complexor solution is pH dependent. Thus, unlike the prior art systems which utilized slow dissolving metal oxides or calcium borate salts having poor water solubility, the present complexor does not rely upon the slow dissolution of solids.

Preferably, the delay additive is selected from the group consisting of dialdehydes having about 1-4 carbon atoms, keto aldehydes having about 1-4 carbon atoms, hydroxy

aldehydes having about 1 to 4 carbon atoms, ortho substituted aromatic dialdehydes and ortho substituted aromatic hydroxyl aldehydes. Preferred delay additives include, for instance, glyoxal, propane dialdehyde, 2-keto 5 propanal, 1,4-butanedial, 2-keto butanal, 2,3-butadione, phthaldehyde, salicaldehyde, etc. The preferred delay additive is glyoxal due to its ready availability from a number of commercial sources. Preferably, the delay additive is present in the range from about 5 to 40 % by weight, most 10 preferably about 15 to 30 % by weight of the complexor solution. The preferred ratio of glyoxal to sodium borate ranges from about 1:0.1 to 1:1 at lower temperatures, and can approach 1:0.05 at higher temperatures.

Glyoxal, a 1,2- dialdehyde, hydrates to form 1.1.2.2- 15 tetrahydroxyethane which favorably binds to the borate ions provided by the cross-linking additive of the complexor. As the pH of the complexor solution increases, the rate of gellation declines. As the pH of the complexor solution decreases, the rate of gellation increases. Thus, by 20 adjusting the pH of the complexor solution within a preselected range, extremely accurate control of the cross-linking delay time can be achieved. Experimental delay times have ranged from 10 to 300 seconds by varying the pH of the complexor solution from about 5.0 to 11.50, 25 respectively.

The complexor can also contain a stabilizer which increases the shelf life of the complexor and can serve to enhance the delay time. Suitable stabilizers include, for instance, polyhedric alcohols such as pentaerythritol 30 glycerin, lanolin, mono and oligosaccharides having multiple hydroxyl groups, and the like. The preferred stabilizer is

sorbitol, a reduced sugar. The stabilizer is preferably present in the range from about 5 to 20 % by weight, most preferably about 8 to 10% by weight of the complexor solution.

- 5 The complexor mixture is prepared by heating to a temperature ranging from ambient to 105°C for 1 to 5 hours. Most preferably heating should range from 65-80°C for 2 to 4 hours.

- 10 The complexor of the invention can be used to control the delay time of a cross-linked fracturing fluid being pumped into a well bore traversing the subterranean formation to be fractured. The fracturing fluid is pumped at a rate sufficient to fracture the formation and to place propping agents into the fracture. A typical fracturing treatment would be conducted by hydrating a 0.24 to 0.72% galactomannan based polymer, such as a guar, in a 2% (wt/vol) KCl solution at a pH ranging from about 5.0 to 8.5. The pH of the complexor would be adjusted with caustic prior to the treatment to provide the desired delay time. During actual pumping, a buffer would be added to increase the hydrated polymer pH to above 8.0, followed by addition of the complexor, and typically a breaker and proppant. The complexor is preferably added in the range from about 1 to 20 gallons per thousand gallons of fracturing fluid, most preferably in the range from about 2 to 8 gallons per thousand gallons of fracturing fluid. During the treatment, the area close to the well bore will typically begin cooling gradually, resulting in a decreasing gellation rate. The delay time can be easily readjusted to accommodate the cooling by acidifying the complexor.
- 15
20
25
30

The following examples of the cross-linked fracturing fluid of the present invention illustrate the controlled delay which can be achieved at lower temperatures and the improved gel stability which can be achieved at higher temperatures. Included are examples of glyoxol/borate formulation, data relating gellation times to complexor pH and gellation stability after cross-linking.

Example 1

Complexor Preparation:

10 Into 300 parts of 40% aqueous glyoxal are added, with stirring, 130 parts of sodium borate decahydrate yielding a milky white suspension. Then, 65 parts of 25% aqueous sodium hydroxide are slowly added resulting in a clear, pale yellow solution. The solution pH can range from 4.90 to 15 6.50. Afterward, 71.4 parts of 70% aqueous sorbitol are added to the solution followed by heating to 95°C for 3 hours. During heating, the solution color changes from pale yellow to amber. After cooling to ambient, the solution pH ranges between 4.50 and 5.00. Each gallon of complexor 20 contains a boron concentration equivalent to 0.29 pounds of elemental boron or 1.65 pounds of boric acid.

Example 2

Gellation Rate:

25 The base sol used to determine the gellation rate is prepared by adding, with vigorous stirring, 2.4 parts of a 0.4 D.S. hydroxypropyl guar gum and 0.18 parts of sodium bicarbonate to 500 parts of 2% aqueous potassium chloride

solution. After the addition, the stirring rate is reduced to provide mild agitation to the sol for 2 hr. Then, 3.2 parts of 30% aqueous potassium carbonate are added which buffers the sol to about pH 10.0.

5 Meanwhile, the complexor prepared in Example 1 is blended with 0,4,8 and 12 parts of 25% aq sodium hydroxide per 100 parts of complexor. The pHs of the treated complexors are shown in Table 1.

10 Then, 250 parts of hydrated sol are transferred to a one liter Waring blender jar and sheared at a rate sufficient to create a vortex exposing the hub nut on the blender blades. Next, 0.98 parts of the treated complexors are added to the sol vortex. The time required for the fluid to viscosify and cover the hub nut is defined as the
15 vortex closure time. These data are also shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1

	<u>Parts of 25% aq NaOH</u> <u>per 100 parts complexor</u>	<u>Vortex Closure</u> <u>Time (sec.)</u>	<u>Complexor</u> <u>pH</u>
	0	22	4.92
20	4	44	5.80
	8	121	6.09
	12	275	8.28

Example 3

Shear and thermal stability of borated galactomannans:

The preparation of the base sol used in this example is mixed as described in Example 2. After hydrating for 2 hours, the 500 parts of base sol are treated with 4.5 parts of 30% aqueous potassium carbonate which buffers the sol to about pH 10.3. Afterward, 2.28 parts of complexor containing 0.17 parts of 25% aqueous sodium hydroxide are added to the vigorously stirring sol. After 100 seconds, 42 parts of gel are syringed into a Fann 50C cup. The sample is sheared at 102 sec^{-1} , using an R1B1 cup and bob combination, while heating to 190°F in a preset bath and pressuring to 110 psi with nitrogen. The sample is heated and sheared for 20 minutes followed by a rate sweep using 170, 128, 85 and 42 sec^{-1} while recording stress. These sweeps are repeated about every 30 minutes and the interim rate between sweeps is 102 sec^{-1} . After 359 minutes, the shearing is stopped while heating continues overnight. A final sweep is made after 22 hours and 21 minutes. The rates and stresses are used to calculate the Power Law indices, n' and K , described in the API bulletin RP-39. From the calculated indices, the viscosity of the gel at various shear rates can be calculated and are shown in Table 2 at 170 and 85 sec^{-1} over time.

TABLE 2

	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ₂	Viscosity(cp) at 170 s ⁻¹ 85 s ⁻¹	
	20	183	0.7005	0.0497	512	630
5	51	191	0.7090	0.0420	451	552
	81	191	0.6631	0.0456	387	489
	112	192	0.8411	0.0144	306	341
	141	192	1.0762	0.0040	286	271
	172	190	1.1220	0.0028	252	231
10	202	191	1.1981	0.0016	210	183
	232	191	1.1293	0.0020	185	169
	262	192	1.1020	0.0022	181	169
	292	192	1.0589	0.0025	160	155
	359	193	0.9811	0.0020	86	87
15	1341	192	0.5486	0.0034	16	20

Example 4

Shear and thermal stability of borated galactomannans:

The experiment in Example 3 is repeated using 4.0 parts 30% aqueous potassium carbonate and 1.62 parts of untreated complexor prepared in Example 1. After 60 seconds, 42 parts of gel are syringed into the Fann 50C cup. The fluid is sheared at 102 sec⁻¹ while heating to 160°F in a preset bath and pressuring to 110 psi with nitrogen. The rate sweeps are conducted as described in Example 3. After 233 minutes of heating and shearing, the shearing is stopped while heating overnight continues. A final sweep is made after heating for 19 hours and 40 minutes. These data are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cp) at 170 s ⁻¹ 85 s ⁻¹	
	20	160	0.4708	0.1844	583	841
5	51	164	0.4824	0.1530	513	735
	80	163	0.5501	0.1038	493	674
	111	163	0.5143	0.1143	452	632
	141	164	0.5275	0.1047	443	614
	171	163	0.5224	0.1044	430	599
10	203	163	0.6097	0.0625	403	529
	233	162	0.6572	0.0419	345	437
	1180	163	0.7992	0.0011	19	21

Example 5

Shear and thermal stability of borated galactomannans:

- 15 The polymer used in Examples 3 and 4 is a hydroxypropyl guar gum. The polymer used in this example is 3.0 parts of a nonderivatized guar gum in 500 parts of 2% aqueous potassium chloride solution mixed as described in Example 2. The sol is stirred for 2 hours prior to adding 4.5 parts of
- 20 30% aqueous potassium carbonate and 1.12 parts of triethanolamine, a temperature stabilizer. Then with vigorous stirring, 1.30 parts of untreated complexor prepared in Example 1 are added. After 60 seconds of shear, 42 parts of gel are syringed into a Fann 50C cup. The gel
- 25 is then sheared at 102 sec⁻¹ while heating to 245°F in a preset bath and pressuring to 110 psi with nitrogen. The rate sweeps are routinely made as described in Example 3.

The final sweep is made after shearing and heating for 149 minutes. These data are shown in Table 4.

TABLE 4

	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cp) at 170 s ⁻¹ 85 s ⁻¹	
5	20	239	0.4516	0.1763	505	738
	50	244	0.7736	0.0298	446	521
	83	245	1.1109	0.0046	389	360
	119	245	1.3101	0.0008	194	157
10	149	245	1.3858	0.0003	102	78

The following examples further illustrate the use of the complexor as a high temperature stabilizer. These examples describe three mixtures of the complexor (original) prepared in Example 1 and additional 40% aq glyoxal. The three mixtures are described as per gallon compositions in Table 5. COMPLEXOR A is a 1:1 volume ratio of original complexor and 40% aq glyoxal. COMPLEXOR B is a 1:0.75 volume ratio of complexor to glyoxal and COMPLEXOR C is 1:0.5 volume ratio. In each case, the final COMPLEXOR A, B or C is treated with 25%(wt) caustic solution in a 1(as complexor):0.2(as caustic) volume ratio.

TABLE 5

COMPLEXOR A

(Per Gallon)

0.416 gal original complexor from example 1
0.416 gal Glyoxal
0.167 gal 25% NaOH

COMPLEXOR B

(Per Gallon)

0.478 gal original complexor from example 1
0.357 gal Glyoxal
0.167 gal 25% NaOH

5

COMPLEXOR C

(Per Gallon)

0.555 gal original complexor from example 1
0.278 gal Glyoxal
0.167 gal NaOH

10

The use of approximately using 6 gallons of COMPLEXOR B per thousand gallons of fracturing fluid has been shown to produce a stable gel at 250°F. Six gallons of COMPLEXOR B contains 2.86 gallons of original complexor from Example 1, 15 2.14 gallons of 40% aq glyoxal and 1 gpt 25%(wt) aq NaOH. At this concentration, the boron content is equivalent to 0.82 pounds of elemental boron or 4.72 pounds of boric acid.

COMPLEXOR C has been shown to provide more high temperature stability versus time. COMPLEXOR C is used at a 20 concentration of 3 gallons per thousand gallons of aqueous fracturing fluid at 200°F. This concentration of COMPLEXOR C includes 1.725 gallons of original complexor, 0.861 gallons of glyoxal and 0.414 gallons of 25% NaOH. At this concentration, the boron equivalent is 0.49 pounds as 25 elemental boron or 2.85 pounds as boric acid.

Tables 7 and 8 which follow illustrate two different cross-linker loadings and the effect on gel stability. Tables 9 and 10 show the difference in high temperature gel stability achieved by adding extra glyoxal. Tables 11 and

12 illustrate the results achieved with different concentrations of complexor.

TABLE 6

Fluid System: 0.6% (wt/vol) guar gum.

5 Additive: 6 gallons per thousand COMPLEXOR C.

	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cp) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	40 s ⁻¹
	16	282	.687	22.3455	448	529	704
	44	295	1.047	2.2667	289	281	270
10	73	296	.944	2.7715	208	214	225
	101	296	.619	7.8682	111	136	193
	129	296	.35	19.1562	68	96	174
	158	296	.167	35.5508	49	77	165
	186	296	.08	47.4719	42	69	159
15	214	296	.035	55.8269	39	66	159
	243	296	.011	59.3442	37	62	155
	271	295	.009	57.5	35	60	149
	299	295	.008	55.6496	34	58	143
	328	295	.008	53.5614	33	56	138
20	354	295	.009	51.1647	32	53	132
	383	296	.014	50.1524	32	53	132
	468	297	.003	51.3927	31	52	130
	496	297	.017	49.1633	32	53	131
	524	297	.009	52.1793	32	54	135
25	581	297	.005	53.0392	32	54	135
	610	297	.006	52.2661	32	54	134
	638	297	.014	50.7602	32	54	134
	695	297	.026	47.1913	32	53	130

TABLE 7

Fluid System: 0.54% (wt/vol) guar gum.

Additive: 6.5 gallons per thousand gallons COMPLEXOR B.

5	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cP) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	40 s ⁻¹
	2	81	.03	.2537	83	139	339
	32	249	.627	.0758	535	652	917
	62	251	.651	.0483	385	464	638
	93	250	.846	.0155	337	366	421
10	122	249	1.029	.0058	325	320	312
	152	249	1.177	.0024	288	262	223
	182	248	1.347	.0009	281	234	170

TABLE 8

Fluid System: 0.54% (wt/vol) guar gum.

15 Additive: 6 gallons per thousand COMPLEXOR B.

20	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cP) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	40 s ⁻¹
	2	88	.134	.1554	87	138	305
	32	236	.362	.2102	380	533	957
	62	243	.533	.1068	465	596	914
	92	248	.525	.0994	415	534	825
	122	250	.64	.0515	388	470	654
	152	253	.882	.0137	360	384	427
	182	253	.992	.0076	349	351	354

TABLE 9

Fluid System: 0.36% (wt/vol) guar gum.

Additive: 2 gallons per thousand gallons COMPLEXOR C.

	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ₂	Viscosity(cp) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	40 s ⁻¹
5	2	115	.014	1.2342	373	630	1556
	32	190	.128	.7384	401	637	1417
	63	194	.106	.6006	292	469	1063
	93	196	.101	.5466	259	417	950
	123	196	.109	.4436	219	351	794
10	153	197	.061	.478	184	303	717
	183	198	.028	.5549	180	302	736
	213	198	.015	.6023	183	309	762
	244	199	.012	.6277	188	318	785
	274	200	.009	.6471	191	323	801
15	304	200	.003	.6701	192	325	811
	334	200	.001	.6747	191	325	811
	364	200	.001	.6897	195	332	829
	395	201	.002	.6767	193	327	816
	455	201	.003	.6871	197	334	832
20	485	201	.002	.687	195	332	828

TABLE 10

Fluid System: 0.36% (wt/vol) guar gum.
Additive: 1.5 gallons per thousand gallons original complexor (Ex. 1).

5	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	viscosity(cP) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	85 s ⁻¹
10	33	194	.492	36.3312	267	350	380
	63	191	.556	31.7173	324	410	441
	94	192	.682	17.8267	348	412	434
	125	193	.691	15.9739	327	385	405
	148	194	.712	13.6233	310	362	379
	178	198	.898	5.1232	303	320	326
	208	199	1.036	2.5288	304	298	297
	238	198	1.1	1.82	304	288	284
	268	198	1.148	1.3111	280	259	253
15	298	198	1.27	.641	256	222	213
	329	199	1.566	.1212	222	164	150
	359	199	1.812	.0311	201	131	115

TABLE 11

Fluid System: 0.36% (wt/vol) guar gum.

Additive: 2.25 gallons per thousand gallons COMPLEXOR C.

	Time (min)	Temp 'F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cp) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	85 s ⁻¹
	3	80	.386	.0216	44	61	68
	33	187	.514	.0684	270	350	378
	64	192	.601	.0501	309	382	408
	95	193	.594	.0517	308	382	408
5	121	193	.613	.0468	307	377	402
	152	194	.684	.0332	314	372	391
	183	193	.733	.0259	315	363	379
	213	193	.781	.0199	310	348	361
	244	194	.897	.011	312	329	335
15	275	193	1.147	.0031	322	298	291

TABLE 12

Fluid System: 0.36% (wt/vol) guar gum.

Additive: 3 gallons per thousand gallons COMPLEXOR C.

5	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity (cp) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	40 s ⁻¹
	16	193	.41	.186	430	589	1011
	47	194	.328	.1807	274	392	725
	78	195	.496	.0985	354	463	735
	109	193	.371	.1644	311	435	774
10	140	194	.382	.1492	299	415	731
	170	195	.421	.1164	285	387	659
	201	194	.46	.1003	300	400	655
	232	194	.469	.0978	306	406	661
	263	194	.461	.1043	314	417	684

TABLE 13

Fluid: 0.6% (wt/vol) guar gum.

Additive: 6 gallons per thousand COMPLEXOR A.

	Time (min)	Temp °F	n'	K lb _m /ft ²	Viscosity(cP) at		
					170 s ⁻¹	100 s ⁻¹	40 s ⁻¹
5	20	243	.3181	.3957	571	820	1532
	38	251	.3619	.2814	508	713	1280
	56	265	.3198	.3662	533	765	1426
	85	267	.5028	.1801	671	873	1377
10	98	275	1.044	.0157	941	919	883
	128	277	1.263	.0054	1000	870	684
	158	289	1.35	.0017	479	397	288
	208	290	1.3	.0011	249	212	161
	243	290	1.073	.0022	151	145	136
15	273	289	.89	.0034	93	98	108
	303	288	.6667	.0064	55	66	89
	333	288	.6582	.0056	47	56	77

An invention has been shown with several advantages. The cross-linking system of the present invention provides an increase in viscosity in an aqueous well fracturing fluid and a stable gelled fluid even at temperatures well above 200°F. The delayed borate cross-linking of the hydrated polymer occurs without the use of suspended solids and does not require the presence of an organometallic adjunct cross-linker to achieve gel stability at temperatures above 200°F. Because the delay mechanism does not rely upon the dissolution of solids in solution, the delay time can be precisely adjusted. The chemical delay mechanism also provides a reserve of borate ions at higher temperatures to improve gel stability.

The complexor of the invention can also be used in a dual cross-link system. Thus, by mixing a traditional borate cross-linker such as boric acid or sodium borate with the complexor, a faster cross-linking time is observed. 5 This effect can be used to enhance the early performance of the system at high temperatures by adding a small amount of either boric acid or sodium borate. This small amount of traditional cross-linker will give extra viscosity to the fluid as it is transporting sand through the tubing string 10 from the well surface. The small increase in viscosity which is observed does not otherwise interfere with the desirable properties of the fluid.

While the invention has been described with respect to its preferred form, it is not thus limited but is 15 susceptible to various changes and modifications without departing from the spirit thereof.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of fracturing a subterranean formation comprising the steps of:

5 blending together an aqueous fluid and a hydratable polymer capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions, thereby forming a base fluid;

10 forming a complexor solution for the base fluid by combining a cross-linking additive capable of furnishing borate ions in solution with a delay additive, the delay additive being effective to chemically bond with the borate ions produced by the cross-linking additive to thereby limit the number of borate ions available in solution for subsequent cross-linking of the base fluid;

15 adding the complexor solution to the base fluid to cross-link the fluid; and

chemically masking at least a portion of the borate ions at low temperature while simultaneously providing a reserve of borate ions for cross-linking the fluid at higher temperatures.

2. A method of controlling the cross-linking reaction of an aqueous fracturing fluid in fracturing a subterranean formation, comprising the steps of:

5 blending together an aqueous fluid and a hydratable polysaccharide capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions, thereby forming a hydrated polymer sol;

forming a liquid complexor solution for the hydrated polymer sol by combining a cross-linking additive capable of furnishing borate ions in solution with a delay
10 additive, the delay additive being effective, to chemically bond with both boric acid and the borate ions produced by the cross-linking additive to thereby limit the number of borate ions available in solution for subsequent cross-linking of the hydrated polymer sol;

15 adjusting the pH of the complexor solution in order to control the rate of the subsequent cross-linking of the hydrated polymer sol;

adding the complexor solution to the hydrated polymer sol to cross-link the hydrated polymer sol; and

20 wherein the cross-linking additive is present in a preselected amount to provide a quantity of borate ions sufficient to normally over-crosslink a base fluid forming a poor quality gel without the presence of the delay additive, the delay additive serving to mask the presence of at least
25 a portion of the borate ions at low temperature, thereby providing a reserve of borate ions for cross-linking the fluid at higher temperatures and providing improved gel stability.

3. The method of controlling the cross-linking reaction of an aqueous fracturing fluid of claim 2, wherein the hydratable polysaccharide is selected from the group consisting of:

5 guars and derivatized guars, locust bean gum,
karaya gum, carboxymethyl cellulose,
carboxymethylhydroxyethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose,
polyvinyl alcohol and mixtures thereof.

4. The method of controlling the cross-linking reaction of
10 an aqueous fracturing fluid of claim 3, wherein the cross-linking additive is selected from the group consisting of:

alkali metal borates, alkaline earth metal borates, boric acid boron monoxide and mixtures thereof.

5. The method of controlling the cross-linking reaction of
15 an aqueous fracturing fluid of claim 4, wherein said delay additive is selected from the group consisting of:

20 dialdehydes having about 1-4 carbon atoms in the carbon chain, keto aldehydes having about 1-4 carbon atoms in the carbon chain, hydroxyl aldehydes having 1-4 carbon atoms in the carbon chains, ortho substituted aromatic dialdehydes and ortho substituted aromatic hydroxyl aldehydes.

6. The method of controlling the cross-linking reaction of
25 an aqueous fracturing fluid of claim 5, wherein the delay additive is glyoxal.

7. A method of fracturing a subterranean formation comprising the steps of:

blending together an aqueous fluid and a hydratable polymer capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions, thereby forming a base fluid;

providing a source of borate ions for cross-linking the base fluid at low temperatures;

forming a complexor solution for the base fluid by combining a cross-linking additive capable of furnishing borate ions in solution with a delay additive, the delay additive being effective to chemically bond with the borate ions produced by the cross-linking additive to thereby limit the number of borate ions available in solution for subsequent cross-linking of the base fluid;

adding the complexor solution to the base fluid to cross-link the fluid; and

wherein the cross-linking additive is present in a preselected amount to provide a quantity of borate ions equivalent to at least about 2.50 pounds of boric acid per thousand gallons of base fluid, the delay additive serving to mask the presence of at least a portion of the borate ions at low temperature, thereby providing a reserve of borate ions for cross-linking the fluid at higher temperatures and providing improved gel stability.

8. A method of controlling the cross-linking reaction of an aqueous fracturing fluid in fracturing a subterranean formation, comprising the steps of:

blending together an aqueous fluid and a
5 hydratable polysaccharide capable of gelling in the presence of borate ions, thereby forming a hydrated polymer sol;

adding an alkaline buffer to thereby adjust the pH of the hydrated polymer sol in the range from about 8.0 to 11.5;

10 forming a complexor solution for said hydrated polymer gel by combining a cross-linking additive capable of furnishing borate ions in solution with a delay additive selected from the group consisting of dialdehydes having about 1-4 carbon atoms in the carbon chain, keto aldehydes
15 having about 1-4 carbon atoms in the carbon chain, hydroxyl aldehydes having 1-4 carbon atoms in the carbon chains, ortho substituted aromatic dialdehydes and ortho substituted aromatic hydroxyl aldehydes, the delay additive being effective, to chemically bond with the borate ions and boric
20 acid produced by the cross-linking additive to thereby limit the number of borate ions available in solution for subsequent cross-linking of the hydrated polymer sol;

adjusting the pH of the complexor solution to achieve a desired delay in the cross-linking reaction of the
25 hydrated polymer gel, the delay achieved being a function of the complexor solution pH;

adding the complexor solution to the base fluid to cross-link the base fluid; and

wherein the cross-linking additive is present in a preselected amount to provide a quantity of borate ions sufficient to normally over-crosslink a base fluid forming a poor quality gel without the presence of the delay additive, the delay additive serving to mask the presence of at least a portion of the borate ions at low temperature, thereby providing a reserve of borate ions for cross-linking the fluid at higher temperatures, the complexor solution being used in a concentration of about 3 gallons per thousand gallons of base fluid to provide approximately 2.05 pounds of boric acid.

Patents Act 1977
Examiner's report to the Comptroller under
Section 17 (The Search Report)

33

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Relevant Technical fields

- (i) UK Cl (Edition K) E1F (FPA)
(ii) Int CL (Edition 5) E21B

Search Examiner

D B PEPPER

Databases (see over)

- (i) UK Patent Office
(ii) ONLINE DATABASE: WPI

Date of Search

1 JUNE 1992

Documents considered relevant following a search in respect of claims

1 TO 8

Category (see over)	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevant to claim(s)
A	US 5082579 (B J SERVICES)	1,2,7,8

SF2(p)

1SF - c:\wp51\doc99\fil000498

Category	Identity of document and relevant passages	Relevant to claim(s)

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